

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9 July 2020

Agenda Item 17(b)(2)

Brighton & Hove City Council



Cllrs Hannah Clare and Phélim Mac Cafferty
Green Group Member for Brunswick & Adelaide
Ward

C/o Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove
BN3 3BQ

Dear Geoff

We are submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 9th July 2020.

We along with colleagues around the city have had contact from a number of residents over the past few weeks concerning the proliferation of exercise groups, food and drinks businesses using outdoor spaces, such as the city's parks and Hove Lawns. The spaces are being used for outdoor gyms, dance classes and the selling of food and drink.

This is something we've also seen for ourselves, where companies are putting down heavy equipment and driving vehicles onto the grass on Hove Lawns for example, which is causing further damage to the drought-damaged Lawns. Some groups have strung exercise ropes from the Hove Lawns railings – and with chunks of the railings falling away, we would question whether this is linked.

There are also questions about how much space businesses are then taking away from the public. Indeed, on one evening this week, we saw four separate groups each using its own specific area on the lawns between the Peace Statute and the end of Adelaide Crescent.

You may be aware that in 2014, the city council introduced a voluntary licensing scheme for exercise groups using our public spaces, to contribute to their upkeep [1]. However, on raising what was happening with the scheme in the last few weeks, we have been informed that it has, in fact been discontinued.

There is an increase in businesses using open spaces, without providing funds to the council at a time when the city is trying to recover from the pandemic and access to the outdoors is important for residents.

While we recognise that in the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic there are competing priorities for the city council, we feel that a modest charge for use of public land reflects what personal trainers or traders expect when they buy things like highways licences or they hire space in halls. Raised revenue could cover any

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potential damage to the Lawns and open spaces and will go some way to recognising that the use is depriving the public using publicly-owned land.

There is, in any case, concern the establishment of the licensing scheme was a committee decision has been dropped without committee sign-off which is at odds with good governance.

We care deeply about the provision of public space for the public and therefore request that:

- Efforts are made to re-introduce the scheme with appropriate enforcement via the Field Officers, including providing an updated list of fees on the council website
- It is also investigated whether the scheme can be mandatory for business uses, rather than voluntary, such as that deployed by the Royal Parks [2]

Yours sincerely

Cllrs Hannah Clare and Phélim Mac Cafferty
Brunswick and Adelaide Ward

Notes: [1] <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/fitness-groups> and [2] <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/managing-the-parks/licences-and-permits/fitness-training-licences>